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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0293
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0427
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0028
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS MANAMA 000613

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA AND G/TIP
BAGHDAD FOR AMBASSADOR ERELI

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ANDHRA PRADESH LABORERS IN BAHRAIN

11. (SBU) Summary: Most of the trafficked laborers in Bahrain come from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, according to an anti-trafficking activist. She said the efforts of Bahrain's new labor authority and source country embassies to blacklist abusive recruitment firms is working. End summary.

12. (SBU) Ms. Mehru Vesuvala, the Secretary General of Bahrain's Migrant Workers' Protection Society (MWPS) told poloff on August 28 that the situation for migrant workers in Bahrain has been improving over the last few years. In her opinion, the local embassies of the Philippines, India, and Indonesia were doing the best job protecting their laborers. She complimented the GOB's efforts, specifically the Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), but questioned whether the GOB was motivated by a moral commitment to combating trafficking, or by international pressure.

13. (SBU) According to Vesuvala, MWPS had determined that most of Bahrain's trafficked laborers come from the Indian state Andhra Pradesh (AP), and specifically from three AP districts - East Godavari, Nizamabad, and Karimnagar. She guessed that there are between 20,000 and 30,000 AP workers here. (Note: There are about 500,000 non-Bahrainis here, roughly half the population. End note.) Vesuvala said that although media stringers in the Gulf file stories on trafficking in a number of Indian languages, MWPS had not seen any in Telugu, the chief language of AP. She claimed that although other Indian states have used the media proactively to increase awareness of overseas labor issues, AP has not.

14. (SBU) Vesuvala said there were significantly fewer recruiting agencies in Bahrain than there were three years ago, and attributed this to local embassies blacklisting agencies that circumvented source country emigration laws. Vesuvala said that Indian exit controls prohibit uneducated workers from leaving India without a visa, but recruiters often provide a Non-Objection Certificate as "employers" in the Gulf that enable laborers and maids to bypass these controls. The Indian embassy has blacklisted those recruiting agencies that participate in similar practices. The Indian government, and particularly the Indian Ambassador to Bahrain, Balkrishna Shetty, has cooperated with MWPS. An Undersecretary from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs visited Bahrain at the end of August, 2008, and met with MWPS officials.

15. (SBU) MWPS has hosted fundraisers every May from 2005 to 12007. MWPS raised nearly USD 80,000 at the 2007 event, despite only having gotten approval for the event from the Ministry of Social Development three days prior. MWPS chose not to hold a fundraiser in 2008, but applied for, and received, a grant from the Ministry of Social Development

totaling USD 6,000. MWPS also obtained funding from the Indian embassy to operate its shelter, and from the Solidarity Center, which offered to pay for a website and website maintenance.

16. (SBU) Vesuvala acknowledged that the language barrier presents a formidable challenge to many migrant laborers in Bahrain, and to MWPS as well. All court proceedings take place in Arabic. Migrants generally don't speak Arabic, and few have a working knowledge of English. MWPS has only three Arabic-speaking members. Vesuvala said that the organization hopes to begin working with local lawyers to provide legal advocacy and advice for migrant laborers as soon as October.

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